

Tips for finding your kid's blog:

There are a number of ways to track your child's online activity. Listed below are a few tips to get you started.

1) Check your browser's history. This is the simplest and fastest way to get an idea of where your kid has been in cyberspace. Simply click on the history button of your browser's toolbar. You might also want to adjust the length of time your history is kept. For Internet Explorer, click on Tools, Internet Options. You'll see the history options under the default tab of "General". If you find no history, ask your child why.

2) Search xanga.com, myspace.com, facebook.com, blackplanet.com, etc for your child. Go to these sites, then click search. Make sure you click the radio button that says "myspace" on myspace for example, not "the web". Also, on Myspace, click the "browse" tab rather than the "search" tab. This gives you access to more search criteria to narrow down your results. Be careful about specifying age since many kids lie about it. Also, Myspace will NOT allow you to search for kids under 18 if you are over 18. To get around this, you'll have to set up a bogus account and enter a birthdate that makes you under 18. Try searching for your child by first and last name. If that doesn't yield results, try first name and school name or first name and city, or even first name and state. If you still find nothing, try different combinations of keywords, such as nicknames or date of birth, etc. If you still find nothing, try to find your kid's friends using the same methods. Many times when you find their friend's site, you can backtrack to their site by looking at the posts on their blogs. Note that this does not work if the profile is marked as "private" on myspace or "private posting" on xanga for example.

3) Search the above named blog sites for a blog ring. For example, you can go to xanga.com and click on "blogs" then do a search for a blogring. Search for your kids' school, city, sports team, hobby, anything... again, using the combinations above if necessary. Once you find a blogring, you'll usually either find your kid or your kid's friends, in which case you can use the methods listed in item 2 to continue.

4) Consider a "key logger". There are a number of good keyloggers available on the internet as freeware or shareware. Try KGB keylogger, it runs in the background, and pops up with a hotkey combination that you specify. It is also password protected. It logs all keystrokes, websites visited, etc., including logins and passwords to a text file in a directory specified by you. If you have a home network, you can then map a drive to your kids' computer, where the files are kept, and view them any time. The better keyloggers also have a feature to monitor port #80, which is the Instant Messenger "channel". They record both sides of a conversation in a file. These methods take patience and some time, but I have used them myself and they do work.

5) If all this seems like too much, or you don't wish to spy on your kids, the simplest solution is to keep the computer in the family room and put a password on it. This is very easy to do with all newer versions of windows. Just go into start, settings, control panel, and then click on "users and passwords".